

Brief Course Outline

Course Title: Empowering Citizens

Course Number and Section:

GLE

3009F 550

Instructor Name(s): Dr. Kate Graham

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Disclaimer: Information in the brief course outline is subject to change. The syllabus posted on OWL is the official and authoritative source of information for the course.

Course Description:

This course takes an deep, curiosity-driven look into the these questions by examining the idea of ‘the citizen’ and what can happen when citizens are empowered to play a greater role in governance, leadership and policy-making. The course is organized into three sections: an examination of the idea of ‘the citizen’ in our changing world; an exploration into new ways citizens are being empowered as policy and decision makers; and, conversations about the role of the citizen actor in addressing a series of major policy challenges. Most of the specific classes in this course are organized around one central question – focused on engaging, lively dialogue informed by the materials and perspectives curated for each class.

Students: don’t be surprised if the course causes you to question the role that citizens are, can and should play in our world today – including you.

Learning Outcomes:

Conceptualize multiple definitions, ideas and theories related to key concepts including citizenship, community engagement, empowerment, forms of democracy (deliberative democracy, participatory democracy), co-creation and more;

Integrate knowledge and develop critical understanding of the connections and interplay between citizenship, governance and leadership;

Deepen their own understanding (and ideally, interest and investment) in a host of contemporary policy challenges where the individual actor can play a key role in driving change;

Demonstrate critical awareness of and commitment to the public good and ethical decision making, including transparency and accountability, particularly in the formation of public policy; and

Develop self-awareness about their own interest as citizens in the world.

Textbooks and Course Materials:

This course draws on two central texts which are both available on OWL (and via the library):

Bua, Adrian and Sonia Bussu, Reclaiming Participatory Governance: Social Movements and

the Rise of Democratic Innovation, Routledge Studies in Democratic Innovations (2023).

OECD, Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave, OECD Publishing, Paris (2020).

We will also be engaging with an array of materials including journal articles, media reports, podcasts and more. All readings are posted in the schedule below, and when possible will be made available in OWL. Weekly readings may change or be added, as events develop (eg. relevant media articles about current events will be added throughout the course).

Methods Of Evaluation:

Assignment	Due Date mm/dd/yy	Weight - %
Class Contributions	December 8, 2025	20
Reflection Paper 1	September 26, 2025	15
Reflection Paper 2	October 31, 2025	15
Case Study (Small Groups)	Ongoing	20
Final Essay	December 5, 2025	30

In solidarity with the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples on whose traditional treaty and unceded territories this course is shared.

Wednesday, August 20, 2025